

**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT JACKSTA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF BORDER SECURITY AND FACILITATION
OFFICE OF FIELD OPERATIONS
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
HEARING ON "BORDER SECURITY: SAFE OR SIEVE?"**

JANUARY 30, 2003

Senator Grassley, Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am Robert Jacksta, Executive Director of Border Security and Facilitation, Office of Field Operations. I would like to discuss today, the efforts of the U.S. Customs Service to secure our borders against terrorism and other criminal threats while efficiently processing people, cargo, and conveyances at our ports of entry.

Prior to full integration into the Department of Homeland Security, Customs has historically shared the responsibility of protecting our borders with multiple agencies, our closest partner in this endeavor being the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). All people and goods entering the United States must legally enter through one of over 300 land, air, or sea ports, which are controlled points of entry into the U.S. from foreign countries. In fiscal year 2002, more than 400 million people passed through these ports into the United States. I would like to add that we also have a close working relationship with the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. APHIS monitors both people and cargo to prevent the entry of foreign pests and diseases that could harm both agriculture and people.

Customs, INS, and other agencies jointly manage the borders of the United States. INS controls the entry of persons, and Customs controls the entry of merchandise (cargo).

Customs and INS have been working very closely on a number of initiatives in support of the efficient and effective screening of travelers and conveyances entering and leaving the United States. Examples of these initiatives include the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS), Dedicated Commuter Lane (DCL), and License Plate Reader (LPR) programs. I would also like to recognize the Transportation Security Administration's efforts in these areas.

Customs is also a member of the Data Management Improvement Act (DMIA) Task Force that was established in part to assess how the U.S. can improve the flow of travelers at airports, seaports, and land border ports of entry.

Customs is committed to programs aimed at efficiently and reliably identifying compliant travelers while ensuring that all travelers are screened appropriately. I would like to outline current programs which utilize a combination of advance information, pre-screening and enrollment of compliant, frequent travelers, and biometric technology to aid in cross border processing.

NEXUS and SENTRI

Customs and INS have developed the Dedicated Commuter Lane (DCL) program to allow compliant, pre-screened travelers to be processed expeditiously by both agencies. Applicants are interviewed, queried against enforcement

databases and watch lists, and a biometric (fingerprint) is captured, checked against the INS IDENT database, and maintained as part of the applicant's file. These programs are called NEXUS on the U.S. – Canada Border and Secure Electronic Network for Travelers (SENTRI) on the U.S. - Mexico Border. Separating compliant travelers under the NEXUS and SENTRI programs allows Customs and INS to concentrate efforts on non-compliant travelers.

Free and Secure Trade (FAST)

Another program is “Free and Secure Trade,” which is often referred to as the FAST program, an automated cargo release system designed to expedite the processing of highly compliant importers and drivers. Drivers participating in the FAST program are required to undergo a background review by Canadian Customs and Immigration and U. S. Customs and Immigration. If approved, the driver will be required to carry a FAST identification card that indicates the driver's registered status. The card has unique identifiers to allow for expeditious identification and processing of the driver.

Advance Passenger Information System (APIS)

In cooperation with the INS and the Airline Industry, Customs developed the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) in 1988 to provide carriers with an electronic means of collecting and transmitting passenger and crew biographical data to Customs and INS. APIS is an enforcement selectivity tool that automatically queries passenger information against enforcement databases. APIS allows Customs and INS to facilitate law-abiding passengers and identify those passengers who may be attempting to introduce contraband into the United States. APIS is currently capable of capturing 100% of air/sea passenger/crew data both inbound and outbound.

Air NEXUS

Customs has also been working closely with Canadian Customs and Immigration on the NEXUS - AIR project. This project takes positive steps in addressing the need for expedited processing of travelers deemed to be compliant based on various risk assessment tools. The project will encompass some form of technology (biometric) to validate identity. Program eligibility is assessed through queries against enforcement databases, interviews, and background checks that review employment and address histories.

Northern Border Ports

With Congressional support, Customs has been able to strengthen northern border ports with the addition of several hundred new inspectors, agents

and the installation of technology and infrastructure improvements. In addition, we are continuing to up-grade ports of entry on the southern border.

Equipment/Technology

Finally, Customs and INS are utilizing various technologies at its ports of entry. One of the most widely used technologies is the document reader, which reads information from a magnetic strip on certain documents (Passports, Visas, and Border Crossing Cards), and then downloads the information into a system that creates an automatic enforcement database query and a record of the traveler.

Thank you again, Chairman Grassley and members of the Committee, for giving the Customs Service this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.